

44 (3) SAFFRON
WALDEN

THE RURAL DISTRICT
of
SAFFRON WALDEN
in the
ADMINISTRATIVE COUNTY OF ESSEX

THE
ANNUAL REPORT
of the
Medical Officer of Health
FOR THE YEAR 1946

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P R E F A C E

TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SAFFRON WALDEN RURAL
DISTRICT COUNCIL.

I have the honour to submit the Annual Report for the year 1946.

The Registrar General's estimate of the population of the District for the year was 15,970. This represents an increase of 180 on the estimate for 1939.

During the period between 1939 and 1946 the number of inhabited houses has increased from 4,890 to 5,024. From these figures, therefore, it would appear that the ratio of population to occupied houses is actually lower than in 1939. On the other hand, the Birth Rate for the year 1946 is 48 per cent higher than the average Rate for the five years ending 1939; while the Death Rate for the year 1946 was only 10 per cent lower than the average for the five years ending 1939.

It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the present extraordinary demand for housing accommodation is due chiefly to a marked increase in the marriage rate throughout the District.

S. R. RICHARDSON,
Medical Officer of Health.

STATISTICS AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE AREA

Area: 78,585 Acres.

Population (Registrar General's estimate of resident population mid-1946):
15,970.

Number of inhabited houses (end of 1946) according to rate books: 5,024.
Rateable Value: £68,122.

Sum represented by a penny rate: £278 0s. 0d.

EXTRACTS FROM VITAL STATISTICS OF THE YEAR

			Total	Male	Female	
LIVE BIRTHS	Legitimate	...	256	129	127	Birth Rate per 1,000 of the estimated population 17.97
	Illegitimate	...	30	12	18	
STILLBIRTHS	Legitimate	...	4	3	1	Rate per 1,000 total births (live and stillbirths) 13.8
	Illegitimate	...	0	0	0	
DEATHS	...	...	192	87	105	Death Rate per 1,000 of the esti- mated resident population 12.1

DEATHS from Puerperal causes:—

From other Puerperal Causes, None	} Rate per 1,000 total births, Nil
From Puerperal Sepsis, None	

DEATHS of Infants under one year of age:—

Legitimate	9	} Total 12
Illegitimate	3	

DEATH RATE of infants under one year of age: —

All infants per 1000 live births, 41.9.

Legitimate infants per 1000 legitimate live births, 35.1.

Illegitimate infants per 1000 illegitimate live births, 100.

The Death Rate of infants under one year of age in England and Wales for the year 1946 was 43 per 1000 births.

DEATHS from Measles (all ages)	...	...	...	...	...	0
„ „ Whooping Cough (all ages)			...	...	...	0
„ „ Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age)			...	...	...	0
„ „ Cancer	...	...	...	...	...	39

DEATHS at various ages: —

	No. in district	Outward Transfers	Inward Transfers	Those which apply to district
Under 1 year	4	0	8	12
1 and under 2	0	0	1	1
2 „ „ 5	0	0	2	2
5 „ „ 15	0	0	0	0
15 „ „ 25	1	1	1	1
25 „ „ 35	1	0	0	1
35 „ „ 45	3	0	4	7
45 „ „ 55	8	1	5	12
55 „ „ 65	17	0	9	26
65 „ „ 75	70	0	16	45
75 and over	29	5	18	85
TOTAL	133	5	64	192

There was no excessive mortality from any particular disease during the year.

GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICERS OF THE AUTHORITY:—

Medical Officer of Health:—

S. R. RICHARDSON, B.A., M.D., D.P.H.

Senior Sanitary Inspector:—

A. ARMES, M.R.SAN.I., M.S.I.A., Certificate R.S.I. as Inspector of Meat and Foods.

Assistant Sanitary Inspector:—

G. E. HAWTHORN, A.R.S.I., M.S.I.A.

Hospitals.—The population of the area served by the Isolation Hospital is approximately 23,000. Patients are also admitted from neighbouring districts in accordance with a mutual agreement.

The hospital has a total accommodation of 32 beds, and the total number of patients admitted during the year was 94 (Saffron Walden Borough 47, Rural District 27); 20 were from Services and neighbouring districts. During hostilities the average yearly number of admissions was 188. The majority of these did not belong to the area normally served by the hospital; the average number from that area was 56.

Nursing, Clinics and Treatment Centres.—There was no alteration in the arrangements for these services during the year.

Ambulance facilities.—The arrangements, by which the responsibility for manning the Ambulance and dealing with calls was shared between two part-time drivers, worked without serious difficulties. But it was regarded as only a temporary measure and it was realised that a safer scheme should be adopted as soon as possible.

When the services of a whole-time Ambulance Officer became available, the two Local Authorities agreed to appoint him, and, in accordance with the policy which had been approved in the previous year, it was decided to employ him at the Isolation Hospital where he could be usefully occupied in the interests of both Authorities, with the added advantage of being near the ambulance and having the use of a constant telephone service.

While this is definitely a more satisfactory arrangement, it can only be regarded as the first step in the provision of an efficient ambulance service. There is still the uncertainty of being able to find part-time assistance on short notice, and the necessity of relying too much on the support from ambulance services outside the district.

The lack of an associated car service is a further disadvantage. Owing to post-war conditions it was found impossible to continue the work which had been carried out by the Voluntary Car Pool during the war years, and the necessity for which still exists.

Section 27 of the National Health Act, 1946, lays on Local Health Authorities the duty of providing all Ambulance Services after an appointed day, and the powers conferred on District Councils, by Section 197 of the Public Health Act, 1936, will be repealed.

The proposed Ambulance Service contemplates the employment of "Sitting Case Cars" in addition to Ambulances. Joint arrangements are to be made with neighbouring Authorities. Residence, local government and other boundaries will be disregarded, but the primary responsibility for providing transport will lie with the Local Health Authority in whose area the need arises.

Combination with Fire Service may be considered should responsibility for the latter pass to the control of the Local Health Authority on the appointed day.

Ambulance stations will be required where calls of the greatest urgency are expected; their situation depending on the distribution of population, the location of industrial undertakings, hospitals or treatment centres, and civil aerodromes. Special arrangements will be required, where the area includes a major airport, for dealing with patients suffering from typhus, smallpox, etc.

Water.—Chlorination Plants have been fixed at all pumping stations, and the Southern supply has been provided with a Filtration Plant. Routine samples are taken quarterly. All samples collected during the year were reported to be of a satisfactory standard of purity.

A special Committee was appointed to consider the applications for extensions of the Mains to certain outlying properties.

A mutual aid scheme, similar to that which had been in existence in the Eastern Region during hostilities was suggested by the Essex Water Undertakings Technical Committee, and was supported by the Council.

The Rural Water Supplies and Sewerage Act, 1944, placed at the disposal of the Minister £15,000,000 to assist schemes for the provision or improvement of water supplies, and provisions of sewerage facilities where water supplies have already been provided in rural areas.

Drainage and Sewerage.—The resumed negotiations with the Saffron Walden Borough Council for the inclusion of Littlebury and Chesterford parishes in the proposed new Works were continued; an alternative site for the Works was selected at Stumps Cross, and plans were amended.

The inadequacy of the Stansted Sewage Works had already been reported. The Engineer reported an infiltration of water—estimated at 19,000 gallons per day—into the sewers at Newport, and advised palliative measures including the provision of automatic electric pumps. The effluent from these Works was reported to be below the County Standard.

It was resolved that a Consulting Engineer be engaged to prepare a comprehensive Sewerage Scheme for the whole of the District.

Cesspools.—The Bye-laws stipulate that all cesspools shall be watertight, and overflow pipes prohibited. The Sanitary Inspector reported that the enforcement of this Bye-law would mean that no cesspool drainage could be permitted unless the Council undertake to provide for their emptying. To overcome this difficulty the Council's Engineer prepared plans for a small septic-tank and filter, to be installed instead of the water-tight cesspool.

There is a remote possibility that water supplies may be contaminated by existing cesspools which leak or overflow, and the only real solution of this problem would appear to be provision of modern drainage in every village.

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD

MILK AND DAIRIES ORDERS.

National Milk Testing and Advisory Scheme.—The Testing and Advisory Scheme is carried out under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and details of the procedure have been explained to all Local Authorities in various Ministry of Health circulars.

Under this Scheme, all milk delivered from farms is sampled and tested; a special form of test being used which has been adopted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries for the specific purpose of determining the keeping quality of milk.

In cases where unsatisfactory results are obtained, the Executive Committee send an Inspector to the farms to ascertain why the milk is defective, and to suggest remedies.

While the testing is done in Trade Laboratories, and Local Authorities are not concerned in the actual sampling, in order to secure co-operation all unsatisfactory cases are reported to the Local Authority, whose Inspector accompanies the representative of the War Agricultural Executive Committee on his advisory visits to the farms in question.

In addition to the milk testing supervised by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, routine sampling work is undertaken by the Essex County Council. Under the County Scheme at least six samples per year are obtained from farms licensed to produce T.T. or Accredited Milk; if unsatisfactory results are obtained the number is exceeded. Where milk is supplied to schools, one sample per school term is obtained at the school, and submitted to various tests.

The responsibilities of Local Authorities, under the Milk and Dairies Orders, are not affected by either of these Schemes, but they are advised to concentrate chiefly on the methods of handling, processing and conveyance of milk; buildings being of secondary importance.

HOUSING

The Housing Survey was continued throughout the year. The previous Survey, carried out nine years ago, provided valuable information regarding conditions at that time. The number of dwelling houses then found to be totally unfit for habitation was 264, while an additional 375 were considered unfit but possibly capable of being rendered fit. The number of dwellings statutorily overcrowded at the end of the year 1938 was 63.

At the beginning of the year 1946, the Council's post-war housing programme included the provision of 340 new houses. Sites were already owned in fifteen parishes, and fifteen new sites had been approved by the Town Planning Officer and the Government Departments. Negotiations for their purchase were being carried out by the District Valuer.

Sites for temporary houses in four parishes were also approved, and the possibility of adapting redundant Service buildings was investigated. Representatives of the Council attended a conference at which the Principle Housing Officer for the Eastern Region explained the scheme for the erection of Airey pre-cast concrete houses.

The Essex War Agricultural Committee then drew the attention of Rural Councils to the need for houses for agricultural workers; pointing out that the position would become critical when P.O.W. labour ceased, and undertaking to provide a list indicating the needs of each parish. It was estimated that 266 additional houses would be required for this purpose.

At the same time, the North-West Essex Planning Committee put forward a Plan, the main principle of which was that building should generally be limited to specified villages so that a saving could be made in the future provision of drainage and other public services. This would mean that practically all Council houses would be limited to certain building zones as defined.

In June, the Ministry of Health authorised the Council to invite tenders for 80 houses, and in August tenders relating to the first 28 were approved.

Inevitably, delay was experienced in negotiations for the purchase of sites; and materials and components were found to be in short supply. On this subject a question was asked in the House of Commons by the Rt. Hon. R. A. Butler.

At this stage, the Council decided that licences should not be issued for structural sanitary improvements to existing houses unless these were necessary for health reasons.

The Architect's report at the end of the year indicated that 6 Swedish Houses were well advanced, and ready for electrical installation; 18 traditional houses were in course of construction.

PREVALANCE AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS DISEASES

The incidence of infectious diseases was again low, and no deaths were attributed to any of the ordinary forms of infection. For the third year in succession no cases of diphtheria were notified.

Diphtheria Immunisation.—The Local Authority continued to be responsible for the immunisation of school children, while the Welfare Authority had become responsible for the immunisation of infants and children under school age. Throughout the year regular clinics were held at Saffron Walden, Stansted, Newport and Debden, while special clinics were arranged at village schools.

During the year a number of vessels which had smallpox on board arrived at various ports in the United Kingdom. This necessitated the tracing and supervision of known contacts who came to the district on disembarking. The number of such contacts traced during the year was 15.

Similar provisions exist for the notification and supervision of persons arriving from abroad at Airports, who have been in contact with smallpox, typhus, plague, cholera, etc., but none were notified during the year.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES (OTHER THAN TUBERCULOSIS)
DURING THE YEAR 1946

Disease	Total Cases Notified	Cases admitted to Hospital	Deaths
Small Pox	—	—	—
Scarlet Fever	23	10	0
Diphtheria	—	—	0
Enteric Fever (including Paratyphoid)	—	—	—
Puerperal Fever	—	—	0
Puerperal Pyrexia	1	—	0
Pneumonia	10	—	0
Erysipelas	3	—	0
Other Diseases notifiable (Jaundice)	8	—	0
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	—	—	0
Whooping Cough	37	—	0
Measles	175	16	0
Poliomyelitis	—	—	0
Typhus Fever	—	—	0

TUBERCULOSIS

Age Periods	NEW CASES				DEATHS			
	Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary		Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
5	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
25	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	0
35	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
45	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
55	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	0
65 upwards... ..	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	4	2	4	3	2	1	1	0

Of the 6 Pulmonary Tuberculosis cases, 3 were transferred from other districts. Of the non-Pulmonary Tuberculosis cases, one was transferred from another district and one was a German Prisoner-of-War.

SENIOR SANITARY INSPECTOR'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1946.

TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SAFFRON WALDEN RURAL
DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in submitting to you the Annual Report upon the work of the Department.

SANITARY INSPECTION OF THE AREA.

Inspections made during the year totalled 3,611 and details as to the nature of these inspections are given below:—

Housing Inspections and Re-visits (not including Rural Housing Survey)	162
Inspections re Unsatisfactory Housing Accommodation, overcrowding, etc.	43
Inspections in connection with Rural Housing Survey ...	2116
" " " " Public Health Nuisances ...	38
" of premises infested with vermin	13
" " " in filthy condition	8
Visits in connection with Infectious Diseases	33
Visits to Smallpox contacts	14
Premises disinfected after Infectious Diseases	24
Inspections of premises infested with rats and mice ...	44
" " Cowsheds and Dairies	112
" " Bakehouses	19
" " Slaughterhouses	28
" " Food Premises, Shops, etc.	24
" " Factories	16
" " proposed drainage systems	61
" " new drainage	25
Drains water tested	16
Inspections of defective drainage	94
" in connection with Refuse and Night Soil Collection	74
Visits to Refuse Tips	63
Inspections in connection with water supplies	16
" " " " Movable dwellings	36
" " " " proposed Requisitioning' ...	154
Visits to Requisitioned Properties	276
Inspections re letting of rooms under Defence Regulation No. 68CB	7
Miscellaneous Visits	95

FACTORIES AND WORKSHOPS TABLES

1. INSPECTION

PREMISES (1)	NUMBER OF		
	Inspections (2)	Written Notices (3)	Prosecutions (4)
FACTORIES			
with mechanical cal power ...	9	1	—
without mechani- power ...	7	—	—
Total ...	16	1	—

2. DEFECTS FOUND

PARTICULARS (1)	NUMBER OF DEFECTS			Number of Prosec- utions (5)
	Found (2)	Reme- died (3)	Referred to H.M. Inspector (4)	
Nuisances under the Public Health Acts :—				
Want of Cleanliness	—	—	—	—
Want of Ventilation	—	—	—	—
Overcrowding	—	—	—	—
Want of Drainage of Floors...	—	—	—	—
Other Nuisances	—	—	—	—
Sanitary (insufficient) ...	—	—	—	—
Accommodation (unsuitable or defective)	2	2	—	—
(not separate for sexes) ...	—	—	—	—
Total ...	2	2	—	—

HOUSING.

With the continued shortage of labour and materials housing conditions generally throughout the District have shown little improvement. However in every case where it was found that repairs were essential in order to make premises reasonably habitable, informal action was taken, resulting in 86 Preliminary Notices being served upon owners. 62 of these notices had been complied with by the end of the year, but not without repeated visits being made to advise and assist builders in obtaining the necessary materials. In 2 cases Statutory Notices were served, both of which were complied with.

Little improvement can be recorded regarding abatement of overcrowding. Three cases of definite "Statutory" overcrowding were abated during the year by the families finding alternative accommodation consequent upon help being given by the department.

In the meantime every effort was made to ensure that all potential housing accommodation was put to proper use, and the table below indicates the success achieved in this connection:

Vacant properties investigated	...	...	...	79
Number considered unsuitable for occupation	...			4
„ occupied following preliminary action	...			62
„ „ „ service of Requisitioning Notices	...	...	...	10
„ Requisitioned	...	...	...	1
„ awaiting repairs before occupation	...	...		2
„ of properties under Requisition at beginning of year	...	...	...	50
„ of properties under Requisition at end of year				44
„ of families in Requisitioned properties at beginning of year	...	...	...	52
„ of families in Requisitioned properties at end of year	...	...	...	46

The Rural Housing Survey outlined in the "Hobhouse" Committee's Report was commenced in December 1945, and made reasonably good progress during the year. Although detailed inspection is only being made of properties falling into categories 3, 4 and 5 (requiring major repairs, reconstruction or demolition), the Survey when completed will present an overall picture of housing conditions existing in the District and provide a programme of improvement, which it is hoped will be proceeded with as soon as new construction is under way.

By the end of 1946, 18 parishes had been surveyed and 2,116 houses inspected and recorded.

SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE.

The maintenance of the Sewage Works at Stansted and Newport was not carried out without difficulty, and the Engineer reports that it becomes increasingly obvious that some replacement of the pumping machinery will have to be given early consideration in view of the considerable delay which is likely to be caused in the complete modernisation of these works.

The number of new drainage systems installed by owners during the year indicates that the "pail closet" is not readily accepted, especially by those who have previously been residing in urban areas where water carriage systems are installed.

PUBLIC CLEANSING.

The collection of refuse continues to be carried out by two private contractors and the monthly collection in all parishes (with the exception of Stansted, Newport, Great Chesterford and Littlebury, where fortnightly service is given) has been maintained. With the expiry of one contract during the year the question of adopting a direct labour scheme was carefully deliberated by the Council, but in view of present-day difficulties it was decided to adhere to the existing arrangements. However the revision of the contract for the Southern Area enabled several necessary improvements to be made, and this has resulted in a covered vehicle being operated and the collection of *all* household refuse. The last mentioned has already shown its usefulness in abolishing the insanitary heaps of ashes and other materials found in many small back gardens.

The loan of bull-dozing plant by the War Agricultural Committee enabled the work of cleaning up one of the Council's refuse tips to be carried out satisfactorily where indiscriminate tipping of surplus equipment, barbed wire, etc., had been carried out by military units.

Weekly collection of night soil was continued in the parishes of Great Chesterford, Littlebury and part of Newport, but the extreme weather conditions at the end of the year proved difficult for the horse transport used by the contractor.

Following upon applications by three parishes for night soil collection, the question of providing this over the whole of the unsewered portion of the District was considered by the Council. In view of the heavy cost involved however and the fact that the Consulting Engineers were preparing a report upon the possible provision of sewerage schemes in every parish, it was decided not to extend the service.

SALVAGE.

Figures relating to salvage collection during the year are as follows:—

Materials disposed of :

				1946				1945	
	...	—	—	—	—	...	—	—	—
Waste paper	...	43	—	—	—	...	50	17	2
Bones	...	4	1	—	—	...	6	8	2
Rags	...	1	5	2	—	...	2	18	2
Bottles and Jars	3	7	2	—	—	...	1	—	—
Metals	...	25	9	2	—	...	11	—	—
Miscellaneous	...	2	10	—	—	...	8	10	—
Total Income for year				£437 12s. 4d.				£492 5s. 3d.	

The figures clearly indicate that the necessity for saving salvage is not fully appreciated. Window displays arranged in two large parishes resulted in increased effort which unfortunately proved only temporary.

INSPECTION OF FOOD AND FOOD PREMISES

MILK AND DAIRIES.

The routine inspection of cowsheds and dairies revealed a number of instances of unsatisfactory premises, or more frequently, inadequate methods of milk production. Although producers welcomed advice and quickly responded to preliminary notices, this was not done without difficulty, due undoubtedly to the shortage of labour and demand for shorter working hours. There is little doubt however that the majority of producers and cowmen now appreciate the necessity of clean milk production. As the result of advice given 5 new cowsheds and dairies were completed during the year and 6 others in course of construction.

The 17 "T.T." producers and 14 "Accredited" producers were regularly sampled by the Essex County Council staff, and close liaison was maintained with the County Health Department in connection with the issue of new licences.

FOOD INSPECTION.

Regular visits were paid to bakehouses, food preparation premises, butchers' shops and slaughterhouses.

Three preliminary notices were served calling for liming and cleaning of bakehouses and the attention of proprietors of food preparation premises called to the strict care needed to avoid contamination of food by kitchen staffs.

There are no manufacturers of ice cream in the District, and the majority of vendors purchase prepared ice cream which is stored in cabinets supplied by the wholesalers.

Seventy-five pigs slaughtered under Ministry of Food licenses were inspected, and of these 5 were found to be affected with localised tuberculosis and 4 with other diseases.

In one case where extensive works were called for at meat retailing premises, owing to completely unsatisfactory conditions, the butcher concerned agreed to discontinue the use of the premises.

RAT DESTRUCTION.

Regular treatments have been given to the Council's four refuse tips and two Disposal Works during the year, and no serious infestation has consequently occurred at any of these sites.

The main sewers at Newport and Stansted were tested in accordance with Ministry of Food (Infestation Branch) technique. Those at Newport, being of recent construction, were found to be completely clear on each occasion, but treatment was shown to be needed in the older system at Stansted. Upon this being given, satisfactory kills were obtained, especially in the low level portion of the sewers.

In October the Council decided to appoint a full time Rodent Operator to carry out a Survey of the District and give treatment where necessary, such treatment being free of cost to householders, assistance to the Council being given in accordance with the Special Ministry of Food Scheme.

Good progress was made and the position at the end of the year was as follows:—

Parishes surveyed	...	...	...	...	...	...	6
Premises visited	...	...	...	...	...	...	242
Number of infestations found	...	...	...	...	...	...	57
Number of infestations treated (Categories: 9 Major, 27 Minor)	...	...	...	...	...	...	36

It is unfortunate that the scheme does not provide for free treatment to householders after March 31st, 1947, and it is to be hoped that it will be found possible by legislation or otherwise to continue this free service as a normal public health function.

GENERAL NUISANCES, ETC.

Preliminary action was taken in respect of 17 nuisances and in every case the notice served was complied with.

Five complaints of infestation with bugs or fleas were dealt with and in each case insecticides containing D.D.T. were used satisfactorily. One cottage reported to be infested for over 10 years has shown no further evidence of vermin after such treatment.

CONCLUSION.

Whilst, during the past year, every attempt has been made to bring about an improvement in sanitary conditions, this work has often been delayed and frustrated by the lack of materials and labour available.

It is to be hoped that at least the progress of the new housing schemes will be speeded up in the near future, so as to provide separate accommodation for each family, to be followed by the improvement or replacement of the many sub-standard properties existing.

My thanks are again due to the Chairman of the Council, the Chairman of the Public Health Committee, and to the members of the Council for their continued confidence and to the Clerk of the Council, Medical Officer of Health and members of the staff for their co-operation, which is greatly appreciated.

I am, Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

A. ARMES,

Senior Sanitary Inspector.

